

Message Text

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21

ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-10 EUR-12 FEA-01 ERDA-05 AID-05

CEA-01 CIAE-00 CIEP-01 COME-00 DODE-00 EB-07 FPC-01

H-02 INR-07 INT-05 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 OMB-01 PM-03

USIA-06 SAM-01 OES-03 SP-02 SS-15 STR-04 TRSE-00

FRB-03 SAB-01 PA-01 PRS-01 /115 W

----- 098006

R 091020Z MAY 75

FM USINT BAGHDAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1965

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 BAGHDAD 501

DEPT PLEASE PASS FOR INFO ALL ARAB CAPITALS, BONN, LONDON,
MOSCOW, PARIS, ROME, TEHRAN, TEL AVIV

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, IZ, US

SUBJECT: ASSESSMENT OF IRAQI REGIME AFTER RAPPROCHEMENT WITH
IRAN AND END OF KURDISH WAR

1. SUMMARY. IRAQ'S VICTORY OVER THE BARZANI-LED KURDS AND
THE SIMULTANEOUS RAPPROCHEMENT WITH IRAN ARE, IN FOREIGN AND
DOMESTIC POLITICAL TERMS, THE EQUIVALENT OF THE LANDMARK
MARCH 1973 OIL SETTLEMENT WITH THE WESTERN COMPANIES. IN
THE SAME WAY THAT THE LATER ACCORD REMOVED THE OBSTACLES TO
RAPID ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN COOPERATION WITH THE WEST, THE
MARCH 1975 EVENTS HAVE ELIMINATED THE MOST SERIOUS THREAT
TO THE REGIME AND OPENED UP POSSIBILITY OF REGIONAL STABILITY.
THE BIG WINNER IS SADDAM HUSSEIN, WHO NOW COMPLETELY
DOMINATES IRAQI POLICY-MAKING AND HAS BROUGHT IRAQ AN INTERNAL
STABILITY UNPRECEDENTED SINCE 1958. ALTHOUGH HE HAS MANY
ENEMIES THEY WILL HAVE DIFFICULTY DENIGRATING THIS ACCOMPLISHMENTS.
FOR THE U.S., THE REMOVAL OF MAJOR OBSTACLES TO RESUMPTION OF
RELATIONS AND THE ANTICIPATED DECLINE IN RELATIVE SOVIET INFLUENCE
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ARE BIG PLUSES. PROGRESS TOWARD AN ARAB-ISRAELI SETTLEMENT IS THE

FACTOR MOST LIKELY TO DETERMINE THE PACE OF A RETURN TO NORMAL RELATIONS WITH US. COMMERCIALY, IRAQ COULD BE A BILLION DOLLAR MARKET FOR U.S. EXPORTS WITHIN THREE YEARS. IF THE REGIME CONTINUES TO DISAVOW THE SPREAD OF BAATHISM, RELATIONS WITH THE CONSERVATIVE ARAB STATES OF THE ARABIAN PENINSULA SHOULD ALSO RAPIDLY IMPROVE. IN SHORT, THIS REGIME HAS RE-ENTERED THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM IN SERIOUS PURSUIT OF ITS NATIONAL GOALS OF STABILITY AND RAPID MODERNIZATION. AS IN THE CASE OF ALGERIA, HOWEVER, IDEOLOGICAL HOSTILITY AND SUSPICION OF THE U.S. WILL BE A CHARACTERISTIC OF THE REGIME FOR YEARS TO COME. THE COMBAT EXPERIENCED, WELL EQUIPPED IRAQI ARMY MUST NOW BE CONSIDERED A FACTOR IN ANY NEW ARAB-ISRAELI WAR.

END SUMMARY

2. AS ELSEWHERE FOREIGN POLICY IS A PROJECTION OF NATIONAL STRENGTH AND COHESION AND IT IS THE EMERGENCE OF SADDAM HUSSEIN AS THE UNRIVALED LEADER THAT HAS ENABLED IRAQ TO MAKE DRAMATIC FOREIGN POLICY CHANGES. SADDAM IS NOW 39 YEARS OLD, DYNAMIC AND ACTIVE DESPITE A SLIPPED DISC AND BEING OVERWEIGHT. THROUGH A COMBINATION OF SHREWD POLITICAL MOVES, RUTHLESSNESS, AND THE USE OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE POLICE STATE TO HAVE EVER BEEN CONSTRUCTED IN THE ARAB WORLD, SADDAM HAS SUCCEEDED IN ELIMINATING MOST OF HIS RIVALS. THERE IS STILL TALK ABOUT SADDAM'S RIVALRY WITH PRESIDENT AL-BAKR, THE MILITARY VS CIVILIAN WING OF THE PARTY, AND ACTIVE OPPOSITION WITHIN THE ARMY, BUT THERE IS LITTLE EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THIS CONVENTIONAL WISDOM. BAKR IS 61 YEARS OLD, IN FAILING HEALTH, AND BY MOST ACCOUNTS WORKING IN HARMONY WITH SADDAM TO WHOM HE IS RELATED. THE DECIMATION OF THE MILITARY WING OF THE PARTY WHICH BEGAN SHORTLY AFTER THE BAATH SEIZED POWER IN 1968 IS NOW COMPLETE. YOUNG PARTY LEADERS LOYAL TO SADDAM ARE FIRMLY IN CONTROL. THE ARMY REMAINS A QUESTION MARK, BUT SADDAM HAS DEVOTED TOP PRIORITY FOR MANY YEARS TO ASSURE CONTROL OF IT THROUGH A SYSTEM OF LOYAL BAATH OFFICERS AND INFORMER NETWORKS. ARMY INTERESTS MUST ALWAYS BE CONSIDERED, BUT IT IS MY BELIEF THAT IT IS TIGHTLY UNDER CONTROL BY THE PARTY. THE UNPRECEDENTED MILITARY PARADE TO CELEBRATE THE VICTORY OVER THE KURDS AND OTHER FORMS OF PUBLIC RECOGNITION SUGGEST THAT THE REGIME IS INCREASINGLY CONFIDENT OF THIS CONTROL. REGIME WOULD, HOWEVER, BE MOST RELUCTANT TO ISSUE ORDERS THAT MIGHT CAUSE OPPOSITION WITHIN THE ARMY, SUCH AS MILITARY ACTION

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AGAINST SYRIA.

3. THE PRINCIPAL INSTRUMENTS THAT SADDAM HAS USED TO ACHIEVE THIS DOMINANT POSITION ARE THE BAATH PARTY AND THE SECURITY SERVICES. THE PARTY CONGRESS IN JANUARY 1974 BROUGHT COMPETENT, YOUNG MEN LOYAL TO HIM INTO THE PARTY LEADERSHIP. IN THE NOVEMBER 1974 CABINET RESHUFFLE THESE SAME MEN MOVED INTO MINISTERIAL POSITIONS. THIS RESHUFFLE CONSIDERABLY INCREASED COHESIVENESS OF REGIME BY

(A) ELIMINATING OR DOWNGRADING ALL ELEMENTS EXCEPT SADDAM'S MEN AND TRUSTED TECHNOCRATS; AND (B) GIVING RESPONSIBILITY FOR EXECUTING POLICY TO THE SAME MEN WHO HOLD POLITICAL POWER. IN THE PROCESS IT MADE A MOCKERY OF THE NATIONAL FRONT AND NARROWED THE REGIME'S BASE. THE COMMUNISTS AND THE BAATH PAN-ARAB LEADERSHIP ARE BOTH KNOWN TO BE DISPLEASED WITH THEIR DIMINISHING ROLES. SADDAM IS EXPECTED TO MOVE AGAINST THEM GRADUALLY AND BY BUYING THEM OFF RATHER THAN BY COERCION. THE RECENT APPOINTMENT OF A KEY FIGURE IN THE PAN-ARAB LEADERSHIP AS AMBASSADOR TO THE GDR MAY BE THE PRECURSOR OF SUCH A STRATEGY. SHOULD EITHER THE ICP OR PAN-ARAB LEADERSHIP ATTEMPT TO CHALLENGE SADDAM THEY WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY BE DEALT WITH RUTHLESSLY. IN SHORT, THIS REGIME HAS ACHIEVED UNPRECEDENTED STABILITY FOR POST-1958 IRAQ. THE NUMBER OF FOREIGN VISITS SADDAM HAS TAKEN IN THE PAST THREE MONTHS (LIBYA, FRANCE, ALGERIA TUNISIA, USSR, IRAN, BULGARIA, HUNGARY, RUMANIA AND GDR) SUGGEST HE SHARES THIS ASSESSMENT.

4. ECONOMIC POLICY - REGIME IS NOW IN A STRONG POSITION TO CONCENTRATE ON ITS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND HAS TAKEN MANY IMPORTANT STEPS TO STREAMLINE THE BUREAUCRACY, ATTRACT THE BEST WESTERN TECHNOLOGY, AND DEVOTE ITS OIL REVENUE (ESTIMATED AT 6 BILLION DOLS IN 1974) TO RAPID INDUSTRIALIZATION AND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT (THE SICK SECTOR). IT IS GOING TO FACE MASSIVE PROBLEMS OF ORGANIZATION, SHORTAGES OF TRAINED MANPOWER AND MATERIALS AND, MOST SERIOUSLY OF ALL, THE CONTRADICTION INHERENT IN AN AUTHORITARIAN, SECURITY CONSCIOUS REGIME THAT RESTRICTS INITIATIVE AND THE EXERCISE OF RESPONSIBILITY AND IMPOSES ARBITRARY TRAVEL AND OTHER RESTRICTIONS ON ITS OWN AND FOREIGN TECHNICIANS IT IS TRYING TO ATTRACT. NEVERTHELESS, REGIME IS COMMITTED TO RAPID ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ITS MASSIVE OIL RESERVES GIVE IT A GOOD CANCE OF SUCCEEDING, ALBET AT A SLOWER PACE THAN PLANNED.

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ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-10 EUR-12 FEA-01 ERDA-05 AID-05

CEA-01 CIAE-00 CIEP-01 COME-00 DODE-00 EB-07 FPC-01

H-02 INR-07 INT-05 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 OMB-01 PM-03

USIA-06 SAM-01 OES-03 SP-02 SS-15 STR-04 TRSE-00

FRB-03 SAB-01 PA-01 PRS-01 /115 W

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 3 BAGHDAD 501

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5.FOREIGN AFFAIRS - THE DOMINANT CHARACTERISTICS OF IRAQI
FOREIGN POLICY FROM 1968 TO 1973 WERE UNRELENTING IDEOLOGICAL
WARFARE AGAINST ZIONISM, IMPERIALISM AND REACTION, THE
ACHIEVEMENT OF ARAB UNITY UNDER THE AEGIS OF THE BAATH PARTY
THROUGH ANY MEANS, AND THE "STRATEGIC ALLIANCE" WITH THE USSR.
TODAY, THE DOMINANT CHARACTERISTICS ARE "REALISM AND PRAGMATISM",
NON-ALIGNMENT AND THE ACHIEVEMENT OF ARAB UNITY IN ITS TIME.
ALTHOUGH THE UNRELENTING OPPOSITION TO ZIONISM REMAINS, EVEN
IRAQI'S POLICY TOWARD THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT HAS BEEN MODIFIED.
THIS TRANSFORMATION WAS DICTATED BY TWO IMMEDIATE GOALS; TO END
THE PERENNIAL KURDISH SEPARATIST MOVEMENT AND TO ACHIEVE THE
STABILITY AND WESTERN TECHNOLOGY NECESSARY FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.
AS RESULT OF THE MARCH 1973 IPC SETTLEMENT THE REGIME FELT
ABLE TO REDUCE ITS TIES TO THE USSR AND BEGIN RAPPROCHEMENT WITH
WEST. TODAY, IT HAS DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH ALL WESTERN
COUNTRIES EXCEPT THE U.S. AND FLOURISHING ECONOMIC RELATIONS WITH
ALL. IN 1974 THE FIVE LARGEST EXPORTERS TO IRAQ (EXCLUDING ARMS)
WERE IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE JAPAN, FRG, U.S., FRANCE AND THE UK.
ALMOST ALL MAJOR PROJECTS DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS HAVE GONE TO
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NON-COMMUNIST COUNTRIES. U.S. FIRMS ARE PLAYING A MAJOR ROLE,
THE MOST DRAMATIC OF WHICH IS BOEING SUPPLYING OF IRAQI AIRWAYS
WITH ITS ENTIRE NEW FLEET OF 13 A/C AND UNDERTAKING A RE-
ORGANIZATION AND TRAINING PROGRAM THAT WILL LAST FOR AT LEAST
FIVE YEARS.

6. THE KURDISH REBELLION AND IRAN'S DIRECT SUPPORT FOR IT
GAVE PARTICULAR IMPETUS TO ENDING IRAQ'S INTERNATIONAL ISOLATION.

IRAQI STRATEGY WAS TO CRUSH REBELLION MILITARILY AND TO EXERT PRESSURE ON IRAN THROUGH OTHER STATES, PARTICULARLY OTHER ARABS. THIS REQUIRED WINNING THE CONFIDENCE OF LEADING ARABS AND CULMINATED IN SADDAM HUSSEIN'S ATTENDANCE AT THE RABAT SUMMIT AND THE DRAMATIC RAPPROCHEMENT WITH EGYPT, SAUDI ARABIA AND EVEN KING HUSSEIN. ALL OF THESE STATES PLAYED A ROLE IN ENDING IRANIAN SUPPORT FOR THE KURDS ALTHOUGH PRESIDENT BOUMEDIENNE GOT PUBLIC CREDIT. THE RAPPROCHEMENT WITH IRAN GIVES EVERY INDICATION OF ENDURING FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS; (A) BOTH COUNTRIES HAVE A NEED FOR REGIONAL STABILITY IN ORDER TO CONCENTRATE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT; (B) FOR THE FIRST TIME IRAQI-IRANIAN INTERESTS HAVE BEGUN TO COINCIDE IN OIL MATTERS, PARTICULARLY IN MAINTAINING PRICES AND OPEC SOLIDARITY (IT IS WORTH RECALLING THAT UNTIL TWO YEARS AGO MAJOR OIL POLICY WAS STILL BEING MADE IN LONDON); AND (C) ACCORD IS POPULAR WITH SHIA COMMUNITIES IN BOTH COUNTRIES. IN IRAQ IT IS VIRTUALLY FIRST THING THIS REGIME HAS DONE THAT IS POPULAR WITH SHIAS.

7. THERE IS NOW SOME CONVINCING EVIDENCE THAT THE NEW "REALISM AND PRAGMATISM" WERE NOT TACTICS TO END THE KURDISH WAR, BUT

MORE FAR REACHING. IRAQIS NOW TALK OPENLY OF THEIR REALIZATION THAT ARAB UNITY IS A DISTANT GOAL AND THAT MEANWHILE ARAB SOLIDARITY IS ESSENTIAL REGARDLESS OF DIFFERENCES AMONG THE REGIMES. THIS DISAVOWAL OF ARAB UNITY UNDER BAATH LEADERSHIP HAS BEEN GIVEN CONCRETE EXPRESSION IN RECENT AGREEMENTS WITH ARAB STATES UNDER WHICH IRAQ WILL PROHIBIT POLITICAL ACTIVITY BY ARAB "STUDENTS" INSIDE IRAQ AND RECRUIT "STUDENTS" ONLY THROUGH THEIR RESPECTIVE GOVERNMENTS. FURTHERMORE, THE REGIME IS PROMOTING GOVT-TO-GOVT RELATIONS WITH ALL ARAB STATES AND CLEARLY MOVING TOWARD RESOLUTION OF BORDER AND OTHER PROBLEMS WITH ITS NEIGHBORS, INCLUDING CESSATION OF HOSTILE PROPAGANDA AGAINST THE "REACTIONARY" REGIMES.

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8. RENUNCIATION OF THIS MAJOR TENET OF BAATH IDEOLOGY IS TAKING PLACE QUIETLY. IT IS BEING SUBLIMATED BY A NEW EMPHASIS ON THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT IN WHICH IRAQ CLEARLY HOPES TO PLAY A LEADERSHIP ROLE. IT TRIED VERY HARD TO HAVE BAGHDAD BE THE SITE OF THE 1979 SUMMIT BUT LOST OUT TO HAVANA. IT IS BOUND TO ALIENATE THE BAATH PAN-ARAB LEADERSHIP BUT THEY ARE MOSTLY NON-IRAQIS AND CONSIDERED LITTLE THREAT. AS NOTED ABOVE, SADDAM STRATEGY APPEARS TO BE TO DEAL GRADUALLY AND IN A NON-COERCIVE WAY WITH THEM AS WITH OTHER DISSENTERS PROVIDED THEY DO NOT ACTIVELY OPPOSE HIM.

9. IRAQ WILL CONTINUE FOR SOME TIME TO COUNT ON USSR AS SUPPLIER OF MAJOR WEAPONS SYSTEMS, BUT IT HAS ALREADY DIVERSIFIED ITS SOURCES FOR OTHER MILITARY EQUIPMENT AND TRAINING. SOVIETS WILL ALSO CONTINUE TO BE AN IMPORTANT ECONOMIC PARTNER AND IRAQ WILL

WISH TO MAINTAIN THE PRESTIGE OF ITS GREAT POWER RELATIONSHIP.
BUT BARRING SOME UNFORESEEN DEVELOPMENT, THE SOVIETS NO LONGER
HAVE A POSITION THAT ENABLES THEM TO INFLUENCE IRAQ POLICY IN
ANY SIGNIFICANT WAY. IN FACT, THERE IS WIDESPREAD SUSPICION
THAT THE SOVIETS ARE TACITLY SUPPORTING SYRIA IN THE EUPHRATES
WATER CONFLICT TO SHOW THEIR DISGRUNTLEMENT WITH IRAQ. IF GIVEN
SOME CREDENCE, THIS SUSPICION WILL RESULT IN FURTHER DETERIORATION
OF SOVIET POSITION.

10. ALMOST ALL OF THE ABOVE DEVELOPMENTS ARE FAVORABLE TO
U.S. INTERESTS AS PERCEIVED FROM HERE AND SHOULD BRING CLOSER
THE DAY OF NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS. THE TIMING SHOULD BE LEFT
TO IRAQ BECAUSE FOR THEM IT IS A MAJOR POLITICAL STEP. NOR SHOULD
WE EXPECT ANY "HONEYMOON" WHEN RESUMPTION COMES. THE INBRED
SUSPICION AND HOSTILITY OF THIS REGIME TOWARD THE U.S. WILL TAKE
MANY YEARS TO DISAPPEAR. MEANWHILE, WE SHOULD CONTINUE TO DEVELOP
THE BOOMING IRAQI MARKET FOR U.S. GOODS AND PROMOTE THE NEW LINKS
THAT ARE GRADUALLY BEING ESTABLISHED THROUGH U.S. FIRMS,
JOURNALISTS, AND VISITS OF PROMINENT AMERICANS.;

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CEA-01 CIAE-00 CIEP-01 COME-00 DODE-00 EB-07 FPC-01

H-02 INR-07 INT-05 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 OMB-01 PM-03

USIA-06 SAM-01 OES-03 SP-02 SS-15 STR-04 TRSE-00

FRB-03 SAB-01 PA-01 PRS-01 /115 W

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R 091020Z MAY 75

FM USINT BAGHDAD

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 3 OF 3 BAGHDAD 501

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11. IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING THAT RAPID MOVEMENT TOWARD AN ARAB-ISRAELI SETTLEMENT IS ESSENTIAL IF WE ARE TO EXPLOIT FULLY THE NEW SITUATION. SADDAM HAS TOLD ARAB LEADERS THAT IRAQ WILL NOT OBSTRUCT A SETTLEMENT BUT, SINCE HE DOES NOT BELIEVE IT WILL BE REACHED, IRAQ MUST PREPARE FOR WAR. THE IRAQI ARMY IS NOW ESTIMATED AT OVER 150,000 MEN, IT IS WELL EQUIPPED AND HAS A YEAR OF COMBAT EXPERIENCE AGAINST THE KURDS, AND IRAQ'S EASTERN BORDER IS NOW SECURE. IT IS VIRTUALLY CERTAIN THAT IN EVENT OF NEW WAR A LARGE PART OF THIS FORCE WILL MOVE INTO SYRIA AND JORDAN IF REQUESTED. IRAQ CAN ALSO BE COUNTED ON TO PROMOTE THE USE OF ARAB ECONOMIC POWER AGAINST ISRAEL AND ITS SUPPORTERS. IN MANY WAYS THEREFORE IRAQ EPITOMIZES THE NEW CONFIDENCE AND STRENGTH OF THE ARAB STATES WHICH SEEN FROM BAGHDAD, CAN ONLY INCREASE OVER AT LEAST THE NEXT FIVE YEARS.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS, PROGRESS REPORTS, POLITICAL SITUATION, POLITICAL LEADERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 09 MAY 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ElyME
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975BAGHDA00501
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750165-0362
From: BAGHDAD
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750564/aaaacfow.tel
Line Count: 347
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 7
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ElyME
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 14 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <14 MAY 2003 by CunninFX>; APPROVED <01 OCT 2003 by ElyME>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ASSESSMENT OF IRAQI REGIME AFTER RAPPROCHEMENT WITH IRAN AND END OF KURDISH WAR
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, IZ, US, (HUSSIEN, SADDAM)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006